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A Weighty Queſtion,

Propoſed to the

KING,

And both HOUSES of

PARLIAMENT:

Together, with ſome

QUERIES ABOUT RELIGION,

For the good of mens Souls, that they may ſeek after, and be eſtabliſhed in that which gives Life.

By ISAAC PENINGTON.

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KING,
PARLIAMENT,
AND
RELIGION.

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A weighty Queſtion, *propoſed to the* KING, *and both Houſes of* PARLIAMENT.

The Queſtion is this which followeth:

QUEST.

WHether *Laws made by Man, in Equity, ought to extend any further, than there is power in man to obey?* Is it not cruel to require obedience in ſuch caſes, wherein the party hath not a capacity in him of obeying?

Now in things concerning the Worſhip of God, wherein a man is limited by God, both what Worſhip he ſhall perform, and what Worſhip he ſhall abſtain from, here he is not left at liberty to obey what Laws ſhall be made by man contrary hereunto.

The New-Teſtament Worſhip is to be in Spirit and Truth, which is a principle above man's reaſon, and cannot righteouſly be limited by a lower principle; but the lower principle in every man ſhould be ſubjected to the higher, both in himſelf and others.

Theſe things I write, not in pride or conceitedneſs, but with an humble heart and in love, that *God* may have his due, *Ceſar* his, and *all men* theirs, and that Wrath from God may not break forth upon this Nation: for ſurely it cannot but greatly provoke him, to ſee his People ſo deeply ſuffer, for their obedience to *him* in what he requireth of *them*.

I am a lover of Peace, Truth and Righteouſneſs, and an hearty deſirer of the Welfare and Proſperity of this Nation, and that it may no more be broken up in the Wrath and Indignation of the Lord; but that the peaceable and righteous Seed, which he hath

sown in the hearts of many, may be quietly suffered to grow up, to the praise of the Lord, and to the good of mankind.

This is from one, who was a Mourner over *You* in your affliction, and is now also a Mourner over *those* whom ye afflict.

I. P.

Some Queries *about Religion.*

Query 1. WHat *is true Religion?* Is it a gift from God, bestowed on those whom he begets by the power of his Life? Or, is it a profession or worship of the nature of this world, which a man by natural parts and industry may attain to, as well as to other things?

Query 2. What is the *sum and substance of the true Religion?* Is it not Love from a principle of Life? Is it not a travel out of the Enmity of the creature, into the Love of God? Doth not the Light of Life spring in the Love, and gather into the Love? Doth not Christ revealed in the heart, and leavening the heart with the savour of his Life, teach love to Enemies; to bear with them in love, to seek them in love, to forgive them in love, to pray for them in love, to wish good to them, and wrestle with God for mercy towards them, even while they are hating and persecuting?

Quer. 3. Are the *Papists*, or *Protestants*, or any other sort of religious persons, found in this Love? Do they manifest by it their Discipleship to Christ, and the Power of Christ in them? or rather, do they not set up their several Forms, and maintain them in wrath and enmity against each other? Nay, would they not destroy each other, if they could? Surely this spirit is in too many of them. And doth not this give a strong evidence against their Religion, that it hath but a Form, and not the true Power in it, and that in heart they are not the Disciples of Christ? for if they were such, they would of him learn the Love.

Quer. 4. Whether any Form of Religion (if not held in the Power,

Power, and ſubjected to the Power) doth not fight againſt the Power, keeping up an outſide ſhew without the ſubſtance, and thereby cruſhing the ſubſtance? What form of Religion, at this day in the world, can ſuffer the Love to grow, and the Life to lead and rule in the Love, and the Lord of Life to exerciſe his Authority in the hearts and conſciences of men? And this is for want of Power *within*, and becauſe of Forms forcibly ſet up *without*: for the Religion of the Goſpel began in Spirit and in Power, and it never can be reſtored and preſerved, but by the ſame Spirit and Power. The renting of the *Proteſtants* from the *Papiſts* was no further good, than it was in the power of the Life: and the renting of others from the *Proteſtants* is no further good, than it is begun and held in the ſame Power: Nay, any Party, though beginning never ſo uprightly, and by never ſo true and clear a leading of the Spirit of God; yet ſo ſoon as it begins to invent and turn aſide to a Form of its own chuſing, and is upheld by the reaſonings and underſtanding of man, it preſently corrupts.

Quer. 5. Whether the power of Religion (and the true Love) if it were raiſed up and reſtored again, would not make the world happy, and ſet every thing in its proper place, both inwardly and outwardly? Is not Senſe an excellent thing in man, if it be guided by Reaſon? And is not Reaſon a much more excellent thing, if it be guided by an inward Principle of Life? But Senſe left to it ſelf, without the guidance of Reaſon, how brutiſh is it? and Reaſon left to it ſelf, without the guidance of a Principle of Life, falls below Senſe. How cruel, how blind, how ſelfiſh, how unrighteous is man, that follows the dictates of his own corrupt reaſon, without knowing and becoming ſubject to that, which ſhould enlighten it, and give him the right uſe thereof!

Quer. 6. Whether God will reſtore Religion again in the Power? whether he hath ſuch a work to do in the world? and whether the time be near, that God is about ſuch a work? and whether he hath already begun it, and made any progreſs in it? Is there ſuch a thing as the Power of Religion ſought after? Do men grow weary of their Forms of Worſhip, and find them empty, and unſatisfactory to the hungry ſoul, that pants after life? Nay, have there not been ſome touches and appearances of Life

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and Power, and of the true Love in ſome poor, weak, deſpiſed ones? O that men knew the times and ſeaſons, and then perhaps they would ſee, that this is not a day for ſetting up of *Forms*, but of longing and crying out after *Life* and *Power*.

Quer. 7. When God reſtoreth Religion and raiſeth it up in power, whether then Forms and Wayes of Worſhip without the Power, muſt not needs wither and decay? When the Power firſt appeared in the diſpenſation of the Goſpel, did not all the ſhadows of *Moſes*'s Ceremonies fly away and vaniſh before it? And when it appears again, ſhall not all the ſhadows and inventions of man, which have ſprung up ſince in the time of the Night, vaniſh before the brightneſs of the Light of the Day? Where the Power ariſeth in any heart, what becomes of the man there, with all that ſprings from him? where is his wiſdom? where is his former Worſhip? what becomes of all his Forms of Religion? do they not all moulder and come to nothing, and he become as a little child, to be formed again in the Power of Life, and born of the Spirit of Life, that he may enter into God's Kingdom? Do not all the old things paſs away, and new things ſpring up from the Seed of Life, which God ſows and preſerves in the hearts of his by his Power?

Now, who is wiſe to underſtand theſe things? who hath the Key to open the Myſteries of Life? who knoweth the times and the ſeaſons? (the times and ſeaſons of Forms, and the times and ſeaſons of Life and Power?) Who ſeeth what God is about to do in the world, and prepareth his heart for his adminiſtrations on the earth? Who is a friend to God, and to mankind, and willing to travel in ſpirit out of this dark, corrupt, earthly ſtate of things, into the heavenly nature and being, where man was at firſt, from whence he came, out of which he departed, and can never be happy till he return thither again; and can never return thither by his own ſtrength and reaſon, but only by the power and leadings of God, revealed in him in an inward Principle of Life? And he that will follow this, muſt firſt feel it in his heart, and then turn his back upon the earthly nature and wiſdom, and war againſt his own corrupt reaſonings, in and with the Light of the Principle of Life, as it ariſeth and is further and further made manifeſt in his heart, through the Grace

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and Mercy of God, which thereby offereth its help to miserable lost man, to redeem him out of his misery and undone estate.

Man hath a time to hear allotted him by God: and when that time is over, it is determined concerning him. He is a Seeds-man in this world; and what he sows here, he must reap hereafter. He soweth either to the flesh or to the Spirit; either to his own will or to Gods will. He followeth either the ways of his own heart, or of Gods spirit. He either feels the power of Religion, and is renewed thereby and fitted for God, or contents himself with a form without the Power, and in effect remains what he was.

He that is renewed, he that is changed in heart and life, he that soweth to the will and nature of God, shall inherit life with God. He that liveth in a form of Religion without the power, and followeth the vanities of his own mind (going out of this world unrenewed and unfitted for God) shall be cut off from God, and lie down in sorrow and anguish of soul, where he will bitterly bewail his mis-spent time, and the losing of his souls life and happiness, for the injoying of a few earthly lusts and pleasures, suitable only to the earthly nature and spirit, in its corrupt and degenerated estate.

O man, whoever thou art, that art drowned in the lusts and pleasures of this world, which answer only to the sensual and corrupt part; O remember that thou hast also a precious soul, which wants redemption, by the power of God, to make thee happy. And one day this soul will be awakened in thee, and when it is awakened it will feel its want of God. This is the day of Gods stretching out his Arm to thee, O slip it not out, for if thou dost, Terrible will the day of thy awaking be, and thy misery unavoidable and intolerable. And if now the pains of thy body be so dreadful to thee, what will the tearings of thy soul be by the wrath of the Almighty? Lay it to heart and retire inwardly, seeking to feel somewhat of God gathering and guiding thy soul, out of thine own worldly nature and spirit, into the nature and life of his Spirit, that thy soul (at present seperated from God and drowned in the earth) may return to and be happy in the center of life, from whence it came. For there is a center of souls as well as of the earthly nature: and *the spirit of man returneth*

turneth to God that gave it, as well as the body to the earth. And then the Lord appointeth it to its proper place, which is according to the nature it is found in. If it be *Wheat*, if it be of the *renewed nature*, if it hath *taken up the Cross and followed Christ in the Regeneration*, then he gathereth it into his *Garner*. If it be of the *chaffie nature*, of the *earthly spirit*, the mind remaining unrenewed and unreconciled to the Nature of God, then *to the unquenchable fire* (even to the fire which will burn and scorch unquenchably) *and to the worm which dieth not*, but gnaweth perpetually, and bringeth to mind all the former vanity & mis-spent time, to encrease the heat and flames of the fire. O where is the soul, that if it were not wholly bewitched and lulled into a dead sleep, by the stupifying spirit of this world, would run so great a hazard, for the enjoying of a few momentary pleasures in the sensual part, and lose thereby the inward enjoyment of Peace and Reconciliation with God here, and of the pleasures of his Kingdom of true Glory afterwards.

Now for a close, let me say one word (in the upright love and true good-will of my heart) to this present generation, that they may consider and take heed (if possibly, if possibly) it is this. Even as a Father after the flesh, is tender of the Children he begets according to his nature, and would not suffer them to be wronged or destroyed, if he could help it: So is the Lord tender of those whom he begets in the Nature of his Life, and in his due season will appear for them as surely as he is God, and as surely as he hath begotten them out of the worldly nature unto himself, by the Spirit and Power of his Life. Therefore, O touch not any whom the Lord hath in the least measure anointed with his holy oyl: For what is done unto the least of these *poor, naked, sick, imprisoned ones*, &c. he looketh upon as done unto himself; Because he is one with them in the sufferings of their flesh, whom he hath made one with himself in Spirit.

THE END.